

June — Summer Travel with IBD

Vacation travel can be stressful and requires a lot of planning. Being prepared and feeling in control will help travelers with a chronic and unpredictable disease relax. Use of advanced planning and practical on-the-go strategies will increase the chances that a vacation will be fun and enjoyable for an individual with IBD.

****Please print the following tips that may be distributed to your patients who will be traveling:**

TIP #1: Start *early* to assemble all of the *information* that you may need while traveling

- Names and phone numbers for all of your physicians should be in your smart phone and/or other devices in case of an emergency or a flare.
- Before you leave, speak with your doctor about a flare-up plan.
- Before traveling abroad, ask your doctor or contact the *International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers* (IAMAT) for names of physicians in the cities you plan to visit. <https://www.iamat.org/>
- If you are traveling to an area of the world that requires special vaccinations, discuss the risks with your health care provider and obtain medically-related information from IAMAT or the U.S. State Department about international travel and the vaccinations that are required. If you are on immunosuppressant medications, such as immune-modulators or biologics, you should avoid **LIVE** vaccines.
- International organizations dedicated to Crohn's and colitis could be a great source of information regarding the resources available in the country you will visit. [Contact the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation's IBD Help Center](#) for a list of these international organizations.
- A typed statement from your physician, describing your medical history and the drugs you are taking, will be helpful if customs officials question you or if an emergency arises.
- If you use injectable medication, you may want to have a letter from your health care provider that you can carry with you through security.
- Before traveling on trains or buses, find out about the availability of bathrooms onboard.
- Before committing to an airline reservation, check to see if you will be able to reserve a seat on the aisle near the bathroom.
- When mapping a road trip, check with AAA or trip planning guides for rest stops along the way.
- The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has a webpage specifically for travelers with medical conditions. Check it out before you embark on air travel because you may need to make a verbal or written declaration of any liquid medication or nutrition supplement in excess of 3.4 ounces or 100 ml.
- Download the free [Foundation Air Travel Talking Points Card](#) and keep in your wallet for you to refer to as you travel
- Download UOAA's (United Ostomy Association of America) Travel Communication Card as an aid in dealing with airline security http://www.ostomy.org/Ostomy_Travel_Tips.html
- If traveling to a foreign country, it is a good idea to have critical ostomy information written in the local language. International Ostomy Association may be of help with this translation as well as with locating supplies while visiting abroad.

TIP #2: *Prepare for your trip by carefully assembling all of the supplies you will need*

- The diet that works for you at home should dictate your meal plans while travelling, so don't become a victim of circumstances. Take packable dry foods, like oatmeal and nutrition bars and packets of electrolyte supplements.
- Always travel with your own toilet paper, soothing wipes, ointments, changes of underwear, and extra clothes.
- Keep hand sanitizer handy in small bottles that can go through airport security, if applicable.
- If possible, bring enough medication to last throughout your trip. If it is not possible, due to refrigeration or other issues, prepare in advance for obtaining medications while away from home. It may be helpful to contact the manufacturer to see if the medication is sold in the country you will be visiting. The IBD Help Center is a resource for individualized travel suggestions
<http://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/living-with-crohns-colitis/talk-to-a-specialist/>
- It is a good idea to take along a copy of your prescription (including generic names - as the brand names can be different from country to country) just in case you need further supplies.
- If traveling to remote areas, consider asking your healthcare provider for an “emergency” prescription of steroids or antibiotics to fill and take with you just in case you flare and do not have access to healthcare.
- Always pack your medications and ostomy supplies to be carried with you on the airplane.
- If you have an ostomy, pre-cut all pouches at home, as you may wish to avoid having scissors in your carry-on luggage. Pack ostomy supplies in at least two places—carry on and checked luggage. Take extra supplies in case you are stranded where supplies may not be available.
- Keep your medications in original containers—use pillboxes to carry small amounts needed during the course of a day—obtain the appropriate storage container for medications that must remain cool while traveling. Manufacturers may be able to provide free travel packs for keeping medications cool, but check to see how long the travel packs remain effective at cooling.
- Take along anti-diarrheal medications, such as Imodium® to help lessen diarrhea if needed.
- Take bottled water with you, if it will be your only source of safe drinking water while away.
- Do not forget your sunscreen and lip balm—certain medications such as sulfasalazine may cause photosensitivity so sunscreen is even more important for these patients.

TIP #3: *While you are away, take steps to ensure ease of travel, comfort, health, and safety*

- If you have an ostomy, alert security personnel at checkpoints at airports. They are trained to anticipate and respond to medical needs while they are screening travelers. Ostomy supplies are permitted through security checkpoints.
- Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate. Traveling often can dehydrate you if you do not drink adequately. When the weather is hot, hydration is especially important—aim for at least 8 full glasses of water a day. Use G2 energy drinks or pedialyte® to rehydrate.
- Drink boiled or bottled water to avoid contaminated water, if you are camping.

- Do not take risks with street vendor foods—locate supermarkets where you can buy fresh meals.
- Avoid or limit your use of fast food restaurants to the rare safe options.
- Be especially diligent in reapplying sunscreen throughout the day.
- Preventing mosquito bites is just as important as taking medications. You can help protect yourself by wearing light colored clothing to cover arms and legs, and by using an effective insect repellent.
- Sunscreen may not be as effective if applied after insect repellent, so, when you need to wear both, it is always a good idea to apply sunscreen first.
- Blood clots can be a risk for anyone sitting still on a long journey. You can reduce this risk by: rotating your ankles and flexing your calf muscles regularly, walking at regular intervals around the cabin or during stops on bus or car travel, wearing travel compression socks, wearing loose fitting, comfortable clothing, avoiding smoking, and drinking plenty of fluid but avoiding alcoholic or caffeine drinks before and during the journey.

TIP # 4: *Carry a Bathroom Access Card*

- Several U.S. states have laws on bathroom access for individuals with IBD
- Carry a card to show to a business owner or employee that explains you need access to a restroom.
- Become a [Crohn's & Colitis Foundation member](#) and receive a membership card with “*I Can't Wait*” language on the back to help you explain Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis to the outside world.

TIP # 5: *Check insurance for travel coverage*

- Check with your insurance company on the type of coverage that you have for travel; there may be a greater deductible and co-pay.
- If you need medical treatment when abroad, it is a good idea to arrange for travel insurance to cover healthcare costs.

TIP # 6: *Be mindful of food safety*

- Always be watchful and pay attention to what you eat.
- Be extra careful with drinking water, and always use bottled water (even for brushing teeth) and be careful not to drink it by accident when you are taking a bath or shower.
- Avoid sushi, raw vegetables (including salads), and ice-cream and ice lollies. Remember to ask for drinks without ice, unless the ice is prepared using bottled water.

Resources:

- Crohn's & Colitis Foundation Travel resources:
 - <http://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/resources/TSA-air-travel-101.html>
 - <http://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/resources/traveling-with-ibd.html>
 - <http://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/resources/on-the-road-again.html>
- IBD Help Center: <http://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/living-with-crohns-colitis/talk-to-a-specialist/>
- International Association for Medication Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT): <https://www.iamat.org/>
- International Ostomy Association (can provide information on where to purchase ostomy supplies outside the US) <http://www.ostomyinternational.org/>
- TSA Cares: Toll Free 1-855-787-2227 Monday through Friday, 8am–11pm, Eastern time
Weekends and Holidays, 9am–8pm, Eastern time
- United States Department of State: <https://www.state.gov/travel/>
- United Ostomy Associations of America, Inc. <http://www.ostomy.org/Home.html>
- Travel Communication Card. http://www.ostomy.org/Ostomy_Travel_Tips.html